No-Kings: Recruitment Masquerading as Protest
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Leah Greenberg, co-founder and co-executive director of Indivisible, described the 2023 No Kings protest campaign as "strategically designed… to galvanize, energize, and identify new base participants." In her Medium article, she wrote: "Protests like No Kings aren't just symbolic they're onboarding moments. They give people a moral reason to show up, and then we give them a path to stay engaged." Her remarks clarify that No Kings was engineered as a political funnel an operation to convert emotional protest into long-term engagement, not a one-off show of outrage.

That interpretation is echoed by Dr. H. Steven Moffic, a psychiatrist and academic who offers a clinical view of the protest's psychological mechanics. Writing in Psychiatric Times, Moffic observed: "Innovative and peaceful protests, like the 'No Kings' rallies, may effectively recruit participants and advocate for social change. They create shared psychological meaning and allow individuals to find identity and belonging in causes greater than themselves. These events often serve as informal entry points into more structured political engagement."

Together, Greenberg and Moffic make clear that No Kings was never just a political statement, it was a structured entry point. On the surface, it appeared spontaneous and symbolic. In practice, it was designed to draw people into a larger system of ideological reinforcement, digital infrastructure, and movement loyalty. The protest served as the introduction, not the destination.

The continuity of language, tools, and leadership between the 2023 and 2025 No Kings campaigns prove this strategy is not incidental. It is operational. The organizers build identity first, then channel it.

Understanding the entry point strategy is critical because it reveals how modern political movements operate not just in terms of ideology, but in terms of human psychology, recruitment strategy, and power acquisition. Here's why it matters:

1. Most people attend protests, rallies, or community meetings believing they are exercising moral agency or responding to injustice. But when those events are structured as recruitment funnels, they become less about expression and more about conversion. Knowing this gives individuals the ability to ask: Am I here because I believe in the cause, or because the cause was designed to absorb me?
2. Movements like No Kings and many others may present themselves as spontaneous, moral, or community based. But beneath the rhetoric, the method

Jeff Pierson

matters: curated emotional experiences, follow-up mechanisms, and layered calls to action are not neutral. They're engineered to move people from participation to alignment. Understanding this allows you to evaluate not just what a movement says, but how it grows and sustains itself.

3. When people emotionally engage in a protest or event, they're often vulnerable to accepting downstream narratives, partners, or policy agendas they never consciously endorsed. The sense of belonging, righteousness, or urgency can override critical thinking. Recognizing the "entry point" structure helps people slow down, assess the full arc of what they're being asked to join, and preserve moral and intellectual independence.
4. It protects against manipulative movements left, right, or otherwise. Extremist and authoritarian groups across the spectrum use similar tactics: create a cause, stage a moment, activate identity, offer a path. Without awareness of entry point design, even well-meaning individuals can find themselves co-opted into organizations that contradict their values or are far more radical than the entry event suggested.
5. When the public understands how these systems work, it pressures organizations to be upfront about their goals. Are they building a movement, or staging a performance? Are they offering open dialogue, or guiding you toward a fixed ideology? Awareness encourages organizers to act ethically or face scrutiny if they don't.

Recognizing the true purpose behind protest movements like No Kings allows individuals to make informed decisions, protect their autonomy, and remain aligned with their core values rather than being swept into someone else's agenda.

Quotes

"Protests like No Kings aren't just symbolic they're onboarding moments. They give people a moral reason to show up, and then we give them a path to stay engaged."

Leah Greenberg, Indivisible, Medium, 2023

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Jeff Pierson

These events often serve as informal entry points into more structured political engagement."

Dr. H. Steven Moffic, Psychiatric Times, 2023

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